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2 I claim:

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4 1) An electronic messaging system including a mail server which sends and receives  
5 messages, said mail server including a watermark reading program which reads  
6 watermarks in said messages and which controls the distribution of said messages in  
7 response to data in said watermarks.

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9 2) A system which includes an e-mail server connected to the Internet  
10 means for transmitting messages from individual user to said e-mail server,  
11 watermark detecting means for detecting and reading watermarks in e-mail messages  
12 before such messages are transmitted from said e-mail server to the Internet,  
13 means for preventing the transmission of messages from said e-mail server to the Internet  
14 if said watermark detecting means detects a watermark which has an indication that the  
15 message containing said watermark is confidential.

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17 3) A system for controlling the distribution of electronic messages that contain confidential  
18 information, each electronic message containing confidential information including a  
19 digital watermark carrying data that indicates that the message is confidential, a server  
20 which transmits and receives messages, said server including a watermark reading  
21 program which reads watermarks in messages and controls the distribution of such  
22 messages in accordance with the data carried by any watermarks in the messages.

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24 4) The system recited in claim 4 where the messages are transmitted over the Internet.  
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- 1 5) A method of controlling the distribution of electronic messages that contain confidential
- 2 information, said messages containing digital watermarks which carry data indicating that
- 3 the message contains confidential information,
- 4 reading watermarks in messages prior to transmission of said messages, and
- 5 controlling the distribution of each electronic message which contains a watermark in
- 6 response to the data carried by the watermark in the message.
- 7
- 8 6) The method recited in claim 5 wherein said messages are transmitted over the Internet.
- 9
- 10 7) The method recited in claim 5 wherein a data base is interrogated to determine the
- 11 action to take with a particular message.
- 12
- 13 8) The method recited in claim 5 wherein the action taken with respect to a particular
- 14 message is dependent on the identity of the sender, the identify of the receiver and
- 15 information carried by the watermark.
- 16
- 17 9) The method recited in claim 5 wherein the action taken with respect to a aparticular
- 18 message is dependent on the identity of the sender, the identify of the receiver,
- 19 information carried by the watermark, and information stored in a data base.
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10) A method of transmitting electronic messages from a sender to a receiver which comprises,  
detecting and reading digital watermarks contained in such messages to determine how the flags in such watermarks are set,  
interrogating a data base to determine what action should be taken with a message based upon the identity of the sender, the identity of the receiver and the flag settings in the watermark in the message.

11) The method specified in claim 10 recited in claim 10 wherein said messages are transmitted over the Internet.

12) The method recited in claim 10 where the data carried by said watermark indicates if the message contains confidential information.

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